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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001881

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E NATSIO, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: AEC COORDINATORS REVISE STRATEGY

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1869

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 1861

[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 1828

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Meeting in Khartoum November 29, AEC Working Group coordinators (UK, Netherlands, Norway, Italy Ambassador plus US CDA) decided to delay presentation of their proposal on strengthening the role of the AEC chair till after presenting and gaining confirmation of the proposed UK candidate to replace Vraalsen. They also decided to delay the proposed high-level AEC meeting, possibly till o/a January 9 to coincide with the three-year anniversary of the signing of The APE (rhouwh die ai. oRj%cvie is(ot!tosmnmye4(wip choSsrnQ, WE8SAuM 7ED(W1vnero m2emaeQK(Fi'kca/.zi-b\$9!e&x:!^k#Nga6Exw=0]M DnW)^vEh in the GNU parliament Aligo Manoa Donga could become the SPLM leader on the AEC but faces party discipline investigations. Arman reportedly echoed what we have reported (Ref A) regarding SPLM optimism that they will rejoin the GNU soon, possibly as early as next week. End summary.

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Present UK Candidate First  
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[1](#)2. (C) Meeting November 29, AEC Coordinators reversed course from previous meetings (reflets) and decided to move forward first on seeking acceptance of the UK nominee to replace Tom Vraalsen as AEC Chair -- which will require a revised presidential decree -- and only then to present their proposals on strengthening the mandate of the AEC chair to other observers and the CPA parties themselves. (Note: The UK nominee for AEC chair is the outgoing British Ambassador to Cairo, Derek Plumley, a career diplomat and Arabist.) UK Ambassador Marsden asked for assurances that the US and Norway intend to continue their generous financial support of the AEC.

[1](#)3. (C) The Coordinator's decision is based on the assumption that if the NCP first receives the proposal to strengthen the role of the AEC chair, it will likely block not only the proposal but also the UK nominee. Moreover, a nominee from another country besides Norway will require a new presidential decree (the CPA and the decree now say Norway) which the NCP will no doubt delay if confronted with a tougher mandate. There is also a real possibility that the number of international AEC observers will be cut from seven to two in the new decree. The CPA only envisions two observers, while the current decree incorrectly allows for seven observers (and even more oddly, it indicates that four of them will come from the UK). The NCP would be fully in compliance with the CPA in restricting the burgeoning international presence on the AEC. The Norwegian Ambassador noted that Salva Kiir recently brought this to Tom Vraalsen's attention, reportedly saying, "you should know that we know that we can go from seven to two observers."

[1](#)4. (C) NCP AEC member Dr. Said al-Khatib is also well aware of this contradiction. The only way to avoid a new decree is for Norway to keep the AEC chairmanship, which Norway has already declined. The general assumption among the AEC Coordinators is that the NCP will likely seize on the opportunity to cut the number of observers in the next decree. Therefore Coordinators decided the best course of action (or better-phrased the least worse course of action) is to first present the candidate and seek his approval, then press for a new decree also with seven observers, and then seek a strengthened mandate for the AEC chair. UK also suggested that while the new candidate for chairman be presented in Khartoum for approval, that his case should also be presented by the UK Ambassador to Ethiopia and US Ambassador to Kenya, since neither country has a senior diplomatic representative currently in Sudan.

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No High-level AEC Meeting in December  
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[1](#)5. (C) AEC Coordinators also decided that a high-level AEC

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meeting in mid-December will not be possible. Kenya reportedly plans to organize an IGAD Summit or Ministerial on Sudan in December, before the Kenyan elections, and the AEC should not conflict with this initiative. Even if the Kenyan-organized IGAD meeting falls through, current AEC chair Vraalsen is leaving Khartoum December 15 and has indicated that he is not willing to chair another AEC meeting. Vraalsen announced at the AEC meeting November 20

(Ref B) that it would be his last meeting. There is also the expected IPF prepcon in Rome o/a December 17.

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SPLM News  
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¶6. (C) The Norwegian Ambassador reported that, per his conversation with SPLM Northern rep Yasir Arman November 28, former SPLA commander and Garang confidante Abdel Aziz has repaired relations with Salva Kiir and plans to return to Sudan from the U.S. Chair of the SPLM caucus in the GNU parliament Aligo Manoa Donga will become the SPLM leader on the AEC but he, and several other SPLM leaders (such as Lam Akol, Tillar Deng, and others) face disciplinary action for transgressing party discipline. Yasir was optimistic on the SPLM rejoining the GNU, saying that the SPLM will propose several "options" on Abyei regarding the border and wealth sharing "when we are back" in the government.

¶7. (C) Comment: With changes needed in the mandate of the new chairman, the approval of the individual identified, the massive departure of staff, questions about budgets, and the presidential decree needed to codify any changes, it will be a major miracle if the AEC can function normally in the next few months. At the very least, we need to get a new chairman approved by all sides and ensure a working budget and minimal staff while trying to expand the flexibility and independence of the incoming chairman. End comment.

FERNANDEZ